

An aerial photograph of a city, likely St. Louis, showing a dense urban landscape with a river (the Mississippi River) winding through it. A major highway (Interstate 64) is visible, crossing the river via a bridge. The city is characterized by a grid of streets and numerous buildings, with some green spaces interspersed. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

III. Current Planning Efforts

Several planning efforts undertaken during the past ten years have proposed a broad range of solutions to the problems caused by postwar planning practices. This study has incorporated these approaches in its efforts to address the current challenges along South Capitol Street.



Rendering of South Capitol Street from NCPC's Legacy Plan, 1997



Monumental Core Framework from NCPC's Legacy Plan, 1997

Current planning strategies for revitalizing southeast and southwest Washington are holistic in scope and grounded in political and economic realities. They also consider a broad range of issues, including transportation, historic preservation, economic development, and social justice.

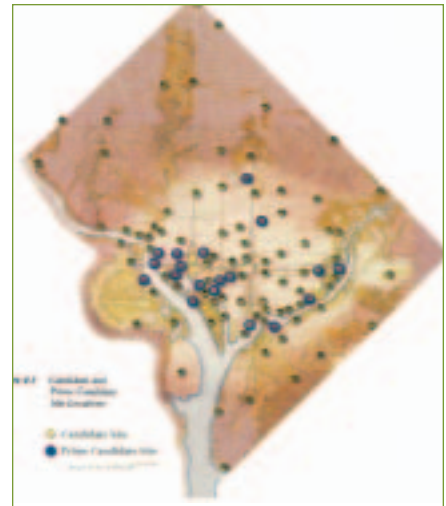
Taken together, these initiatives have the potential to transform the nation's capital on a scale far greater than the McMillan Commission's efforts of a century ago. Because of its central role in Washington's transportation infrastructure, all planning work currently underway considers South Capitol Street's improvement essential to the city's physical, economic, and social revitalization.

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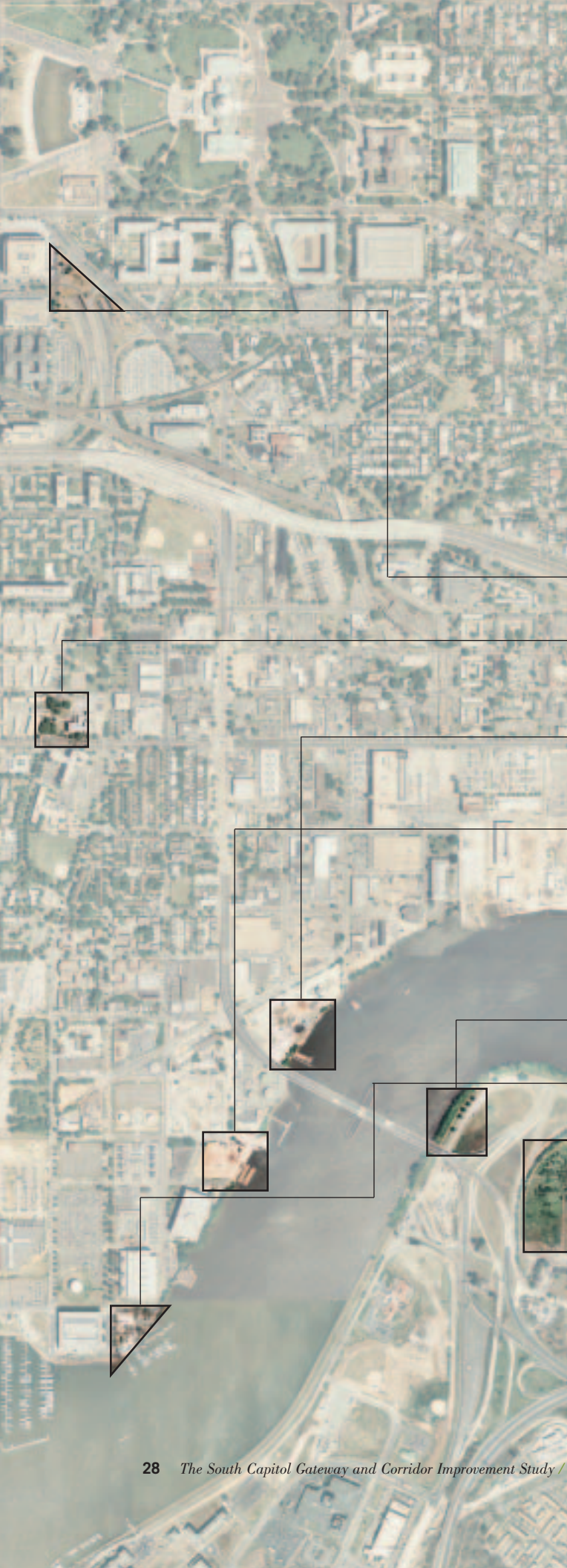
The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), a federal planning agency, described its vision for Washington in the 1997 publication *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century*. Unlike many previous planning efforts, *Legacy* seeks to preserve and enhance the buildings and public spaces contained in the Monumental Core while also improving the city as a whole. In addition to re-centering the city on the Capitol, the plan also calls for locating future museums and memorials away from the National Mall in other parts of the district. This would encourage visitors to travel into city neighborhoods, stimulating economic development in those communities. *Legacy* targets several areas that could benefit from this strategy, particularly the banks along the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers.

Legacy underscores the need for a comprehensive, convenient, and flexible transportation system to eliminate barriers between neighborhoods and improve movement within the city. It proposes untangling South Capitol Street from its overpasses and transforming it into a lively boulevard lined with housing, shops, public buildings, and parks. A new bridge across the Anacostia River and improvements to the street system east of the river would secure South Capitol's place as the monumental yet livable gateway to the city. Transforming South Capitol Street would also fulfill the Founding Fathers' intentions for it to serve as the city's ceremonial entrance.

Legacy laid the groundwork for NCPC's *Memorials and Museums Master Plan*, which was published in 2000. Created in cooperation with the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Memorial Commission, this document designates over 100 sites throughout the District of Columbia for future memorials, museums, and other cultural facilities. The South Capitol Street corridor contains seven of these sites, two of which are considered prime because of their prominent locations and aesthetic potential.



Potential memorial and museum sites in the District of Columbia designated by the National Capital Planning Commission, 2000



Seven sites for future monuments and memorials proposed by NCPC's *Monuments and Museums Master Plan*

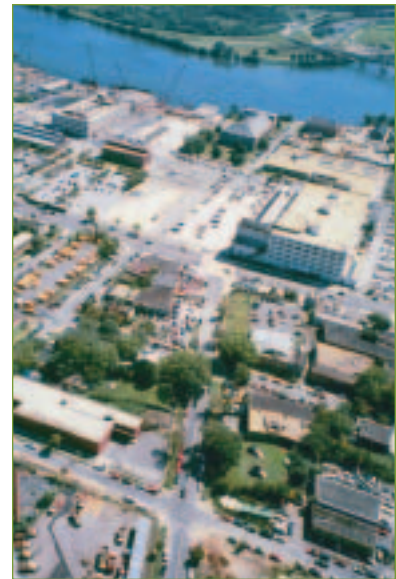
- **Washington Avenue at 2nd Street SW**
- **Intersection of M Street and Delaware Avenue SW**
- **North shore of the Anacostia River east of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge**
- **Terminus of South Capitol Street at the Anacostia River [prime site]**
- **Site in Anacostia Park formerly used as a nursery for the US Capitol [prime site]**
- **Anacostia Park SE near the Douglass Bridge**
- **South of V Street, West of Half Street SW**

According to NCPC's Memorials & Museums Master Plan, the terminus of South Capitol Street at the Anacostia River and the site in Anacostia Park formerly used as a nursery for the US Capitol are prime sites because of their symbolic importance, visual prominence, scenic beauty, or relationship to other national landmarks such as the US Capitol or the White House.



Aerial view of the Anacostia River from the John Philip Sousa Bridge southwest toward Haines Point

The National Capital Planning Commission recently joined seventeen other federal agencies and the District of Columbia Government in one of the most comprehensive planning project undertaken in the city's 200-year history. The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI), a 25-year, multi-billion dollar effort, seeks to transform the 2,800 acres along the Anacostia River into a world-class destination for residents and tourists alike. The AWI addressed concerns about water quality, traffic, recreation, affordable housing, and neighborhood preservation and revitalization. The process included dozens of public workshops and over a hundred meetings with church groups, civic associations, and other nonprofit and other neighborhood organizations. The plan calls for new residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational facilities from the Potomac River to the Maryland state line, unified by a continuous riverfront park featuring trails and revitalized natural habitats.



Southeast Federal Center west of the Navy Yard



Barney Circle looking over the John Philip Sousa Bridge up Pennsylvania Avenue SE



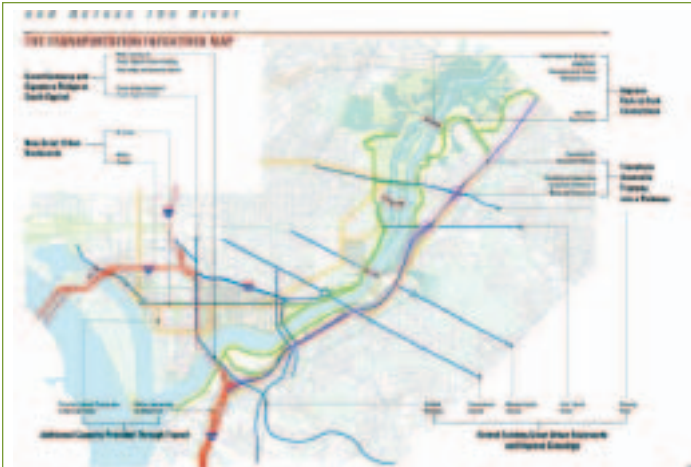
Washington Navy Yard

Goals of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative:

- Restore the Anacostia River's water quality and its natural beauty by cleaning up the river and eliminating sources of pollution
- Break down barriers to the river, particularly those created by intrusive transportation infrastructure, making the Anacostia easier to reach, travel alongside, and cross
- Reclaim the river's waterfront as a magnet of activity by providing places to live, work, and shop, as well as for cultural attractions and sporting events
- Stimulate sustainable economic development in waterfront neighborhoods
- Promote design excellence in design in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning
- Engage all community members and stakeholders to foster river stewardship

Like *The Legacy Plan* and the *Monuments and Memorials Master Plan*, AWI underscores the importance of South Capitol Street's revitalization. AWI and NCPC both advocate removing the Southeast Freeway, relocating the adjacent railroad tracks, and constructing a new, more urban bridge on a different alignment. These improvements would allow South Capitol Street to accommodate vehicular traffic along with pedestrians, cyclists, buses, and other forms of transit. It would serve as the catalyst for development at Buzzard Point, Poplar Point, the Southeast Federal Center, and nearby neighborhoods.

In the fall of 2002, the National Capital Planning Commission initiated a joint study to identify potential alternatives for South Capitol Street that would be further analyzed in the district's Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study. This effort concluded with publication of the *South Capitol Street Urban Design Study*, in January 2003. In addition to identifying potential urban design scenarios, this report contains detailed information on existing open space, land use, land ownership, and zoning.



Transportation Map from the *South Capitol Street Urban Design Study*

The urban design study identified three conceptual scenarios for the corridor that could each accommodate a six-lane boulevard with varying configurations of open space. The first scenario would limit the public space to the existing 130-foot cross-section, and would propose more landscaping and public amenities along the slightly narrowed roadway. The second scenario proposed a 220-foot cross-section that included a 100-foot-wide tree lined center median that could accommodate small-scale memorials. The third scenario suggested a 325-foot cross-section with a linear park along the east side of South Capitol Street to provide public spaces that could, among other things, accommodate future memorials and museums. All three scenarios suggested reconfiguring the roadway east of the Anacostia River to improve access to Poplar Point.

Like the National Capital Planning Commission, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has been working on long-term planning projects for many years. The WMATA Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan, which considers extending the regional transit system, has led to other efforts that will benefit AWI in general and South Capitol Street in particular. The *District of Columbia Transit Development Study*, for example, proposes building a light rail line from the southwest waterfront east along M Street SE. It would cross the Anacostia River at the 11th Street Bridge as one of four priority light rail, tram, or trolley lines connecting neighborhoods across the District. WMATA, in cooperation with the District's Department of Transportation, is beginning a more detailed study of these transit corridors that includes design and environmental analysis of a potential demonstration project east of the Anacostia River. In addition to the 11th Street Bridge crossing, the study will examine the potential to incorporate rail transit into a future South Capitol Street Bridge. WMATA also recently conducted a regional bus study that includes improvements to bus service along and near South Capitol Street. Both WMATA and the Maryland Department of Transportation are also considering commuter bus lines in the corridor.

